Diane Granick.
David Hoagland
Jim Bond
Bryan Beltz
Shane Peregrin
Debbie Walline
Teresa Horne
Joe Pavalone
Michael Carpenter
Cheryl Heald
Cathy Lesniewski
John Madrage
Craig Cummings
Sue Leonski
Lee Hovel

Rich Bonioli
Marc Waller
Gary DeRichie
Mike Conigliaro
Rich Keen Bean thestud
Jeff Kelsch
Mark Trogo
Bob Stech
Brian Nolan
Dawn Kase
Danielle Hutchmore
Jennifer Hadley
Theresa Lutchko
Elizabeth Kovaleski

Kim Cira
Jr Gal
Ronnell
Tracy Cutler
Mike Kell
Eric Karlson
Tom Randolph
Kelly / Mick

SUE STRIEFSKY
MISSY TURNOIS
Gary Williams
Sam DeMunzio
Kevin Bellis
Jim Munley FAO
Jeff Passic
Dave Hawley
Valerie Bracy
Becky Weatland
Donna Ohiz
Patty Granville
Dave Lynch
Jim Robinson
Dave Mowry

1. Pat Vadella
2 Joe Kusarik
3) Bob Ambrosmith
4) Susan Kutch
5) Larissa Slushko
6) Daryl Preston
7) Chris Coplien
8) Steve Wright
9) Ray Grace
10) Jena Cummings
11) Dean Gloeb
12) Paul Daniels
13) Diane Cackamo
14) Joanie Dane
15) Steve Smith
16) Michael Critchley
17) Mitch Solari
18) Dan Serra
19) Bonnie Burch
20) Carolyn Yaroshesky
21) Christine Marie McDonnell
22) Lana Banks
23) Walter Agentowich
24) Karen Marie Bartosh
25) Amy Cummins
26) Sue Bogmatz
27 Joe Karsons
28 Steve Levene

1. Mary Tyler
2 Lori Verboys
3 Maribeth Hobbs
4 Angi Cavalier

5 Angel Lamberton
6 Danisa Williams
7 MARK Ulmer
8. melissa PAIUTIS
9. Abraham Lincoln
10. Lee Sweet
11 Billy Steele
12 Dennis Volinsky
13. Bob Covall
14 Jim Moran
15 Mike Brubek
16 Amy Schermerhorn
17 Bob Owczarski
18 Denise Serra
19 Tom Wiggins
20 Tony Reagan
21 Charlie Pozza
22 Lockranch
23 Sherry Sick
24 Michi Bowity
25. Lou Lalor
26 Rich Atkinson
27 Jacquie Krafft
28. Bill Daneb
29. Bill Daley
30.

Listed on this page are the students of Larry Chesnick who was present on 10-19-1984.

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Essay

A Dying Art: The Classy Exit Line

There was a time when the deathbed was a kind of proscenium, from which the personage could issue one last dramatic utterance, full of the compacted significance of his life. Last words were to sound as if all of the individual's earthly time had been sharpened to that point: he could now etch the grand summation. "More light!" the great Goethe of the Enlightenment is said to have cried as he expired. There is some opinion, however, that what he actually said was "Little wife, give me your little paw."

In any case, the genre of great last words died quite a few years ago. There are those who think the last genuinely memorable last words were spoken in 1900, when, according to one version, the dying Oscar Wilde said, "Either that wallpaper goes, or I do."

Others set the date in 1904, when Chekhov on his deathbed declared, "It's a long time since I drank champagne." Appropriately, his coffin then rode to burial in a freight car marked FRESH OYSTERS.

Only now and then does one catch a handsome exit line today. Gary Gilmore, the murderer executed in Utah in 1977, managed a moment of brisk existentialist machismo when he told the warden, "Let's do it." There was a charm, a mist of the fey overlaying the terror, in the official last words that William Saroyan telephoned to the Associated Press before he died in 1981: "Everybody has got to die, but I have always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what?" Last fall the British Actor John Le Mesurier dictated to his wife his own death announcement, which ran in the *Times* of London. It said, "John Le Mesurier wishes it to be known that he conked out on Nov. 15. He sadly misses family and friends."

Last words are a matter of taste, of course, and judgments about them tend to be subjective. A strong though eccentric case might be made for the final utterance of Britain's Lord Chief Justice Gordon Hewart, who died on a spring morning in 1944 with the words "Damn it! There's that cuckoo again!" Tallulah Bankhead used a splendid economy of language at her parting in New York City's St. Luke's Hospital in 1968. "Bourbon," she said. The Irish writer Brendan Behan rose to the occasion in 1964 when he turned to the nun who had just wiped his brow and said, "Ah, bless you, Sister, may all your sons be bishops." Some sort of award for sharp terminal repartee should be bestowed (posthumously) upon an uncle of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., John Holmes, who lay dying in his Boston home in 1899. A nurse kept feeling his feet, and explained to someone in the room, "If his feet are warm, he is alive . . . Nobody ever died with his feet warm." Holmes rose out of his coma long enough to observe, "John Rogers* did!" Then he slipped away.

The great last words traditionally included in anthologies have usually been more serious than that, and often sound suspiciously perfect. *Le style, c'est l'homme.* General Robert E. Lee is said to have gone in 1870 with just the right military-metaphysical command: "Strike the tent!" The great 18th century classicist and prig Nicolas Boileau managed a sentence of wonderfully plump self-congratulation: "It is a consolation to a poet on the point of death that he has never written a line injurious to good morals."

While such goodbyes are usually retrospective, looking back on the life, they sometimes peer forward. Such lines derive considerable fascination from the fact that they have been spoken at a vantage that is the closest that mortals can legitimately come to a glimpse of what lies on the other side. Thomas A. Edison said as he died in 1931, "It's very beautiful over there." (It is also possible, however, that he was referring to the view outside his window.) Voltaire had a mordant premonition. The lamp next to his deathbed flared momentarily, and his last words were "What? The flames already?"

Last words are supposed to be a drama of truth-telling, of nothing left to hide, nothing more to lose. Why, then, do they so often have that clunk of the bogus about them? Possibly because the majority of them may have been composed by others—keepers of the flame, hagiologists, busybodies. One hears the little sound of a pious fraud. The last breath is put into service to inflate the larger cause one last time, as with a regret that one has only one life to give for one's country. There is a long-running controversy, for example, over whether the younger Pitt, when departing this life, said, "My country! How I love my country!" or "I think I could eat one of Bellamy's pork pies."

As Hamlet says in *his* last words, "the rest is silence." Great terminal summations are a form of theater, really. They demand an audience—someone has to hear them, after all. More than that, they have been traditionally uttered with a high solemnity. Some last words have the irony of inadvertence—as when Civil War General John Sedgwick was heard to say during the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, "Why, they couldn't hit an elephant at this dist—" But premeditated last words—the deathbed equivalent of Neil Armstrong's "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind," the canned speech uttered when setting off for other worlds—have a Shakespearean grandiloquence about them.

Last words are not a congenial form of theater any more. Suitable stages no longer seem to be available for such death scenes, nor is there much inclination to witness them. People tend either to die suddenly, unexpectedly, without the necessary editorial preparation, or to expire in hospitals, under sedation and probably not during visiting hours. The sedative dusk descends hours or days before the last darkness.

Perhaps the demise of great last words has something to do with a decline in the 20th century of the augustness of death. The departure of a single soul was once an imposing occasion. An age of holocausts is less disposed to hear the individual goodbyes.

Perhaps some entrepreneur will try to revive the genre of last words by enlisting videotape, a newer form of theater. Customers could write their own final script—or choose appropriate last words from the company's handsome selection ("Pick the goodbye that is you"), and then, well before the actual end, videotape their own official death scenes. The trouble is that most people tend to be windy and predictable when asked to say a few words on an important occasion. Maybe the best way to be memorable at the end is to be enigmatic. When in doubt, simply mutter, "Rosebud."

—*By Lance Morrow*

*An English Protestant divine burned at the stake for heresy in 1555.

Illustration for TIME by Jo Teodorescu

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Pastor Bissel & Mary & Marty Come a Callin, at about 7:30 PM; they stayed until 9:10 PM, & in the course of their 2½-hour visit, Pastor Bissel delivered a born-again Christian sermon unto me & elicited a declaration from me that I wanted to be saved. We prayed & he asked me to come to his Church on Sunday evening (7 P.M.) and publicly declare my "new" belief. Bissel, in effect, has just "saved" a drowning man who was already wearing a life-belt. A very cordial visit indeed. I shall go over to his Church on Sunday evening and publicly declare my "new" belief.